

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as amended is respectfully requested.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to overcome the objection thereto and to clarify the invention intended to be claimed. As amended, Claim 1 clearly distinguishes patentably from the Japanese reference relied upon in the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b), a counterpart of which is U.S. Patent No. 6,467,807 (of record). The amendment of claim 1 also renders inappropriate the rejections of dependent claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). The secondary references relied upon in these rejections do not compensate for the deficiencies of the principal reference, discussed below.

Claim 1 now recites, *inter alia*, that an axis of the displacement causing member (e.g., lever 16, *inter alia*) extends through the outer column, as shown in Fig 1, for example, of Applicants' drawings.

Dependent Claim 2 recites that an axis of the steering shaft substantially intersects a line that connects centers of the two fixing members (e.g., 16 and 17). New Claim 11, dependent on Claim 2, is even more specific with regard to the rotational axis of a lever and cooperating cams that form elements of the displacement causing member.

The invention recited in Claims 1, 2 and 11 provides a very compact and practical configuration. In the Japanese reference and its U.S. counterpart, an axis of the displacement causing member (e.g., lever 16, *inter alia*) does not extend through the outer column. It is located asymmetrically at one side of the outer column, which is disadvantageous from the standpoint of operability by a driver.

Accordingly, Claim 1 and the claims dependent thereon should be allowed.

Minor corrections have been made in the specification and in some of the dependent claims for clarity.

A Second Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement (with fee) accompanies this Amendment.

This application is now believed to be clearly in condition for allowance.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge to Deposit Account No. 50-1165 (XA-10142) any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 and 1.17 that may be required by this paper and to credit any overpayment to that Account. If any extension of time is required in connection with the filing of this paper and has not been separately requested, such extension is hereby requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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